

**GRIST FROM THE MILL FOR OUR VOLUNTEERS**  
**COLVIN RUN MILL HISTORIC SITE**  
**December 2005**



### **Holidays at Colvin Run Mill**

Enclosed is the *Winter at Colvin Run Mill Historic Site* flyer. December features several volunteer-intensive events. If you have not yet signed up to help with your favorite December event, check your calendar to see if you can spare some time. Friends and family are also welcome both as visitors and especially as volunteers.



### **Muriel Levin to the Rescue**

Muriel Levin recently played a pivotal role in preserving Dawn Kehrer's sanity. Dawn has been using Oliver Evans' thirteenth edition of *The Young Mill-wright and Miller's Guide*, published in 1850, as a resource for the mill furnishings plan, highlighting articles and studying the relevant drawings. In his articles, Evans gives the plate numbers of relevant drawings. However, not all the drawings refer back to the relevant article. Starting with a drawing and trying to find its description in Evans' book has been extremely challenging.

Muriel came to the rescue and created a guide that references each drawing with the page number(s) where the drawing is described. Now you can look at Figure 16 in Plate XXVII and know that it is the packing room and press referred to on page 366. This is an invaluable resource and a definite time and sanity saver. Thank you, Muriel. If you would like to see the guide or have your own copy, please see Dawn Kehrer.



### **Congratulations**

Nick Yannarell is a 2005 recipient of the prestigious Elly Doyle Park Service Award. His donation of 22,000 hours of volunteer service to the Park Authority in the last 20+ years impressed the Park Authority Board members and well wishers in the audience. We know how lost we would be without Nick's professionalism and dedication. We are happy to see that the Board also recognizes his lasting contributions.

### **Millard Family**

On Monday, November 14, 2005, Laura McComas, the great-granddaughter of Charlotte Millard van Sickler (known in the family as Lottie), visited the site. Laura wants to donate portraits of Addison & Emma (possibly copies of the ones we have) and Emma's rolling pin, carved by Addison. She also has Charlotte's wedding portrait and may be willing to let us copy it.

Laura remembers her great-grandmother, who died when she was 13. Charlotte was injured ice skating on the mill pond and walked with a stiff leg throughout her life. Charlotte married John W. van Sickler, a grocer, and lived in Washington DC. They had three children – Joseph, Elsie (Laura's grandmother) and Harry.

According to Laura McComas, John was a ne'er-do-well who abandoned Charlotte and their children for 10 years and formed a second family. Charlotte worked to support her children; however, one of the sons was fostered out to a man who was a piano teacher.



## Recycling the Holidays

Aren't those holiday cards lovely? They are much too nice to relegate to the trash heap. Instead, read them, enjoy them and then drop them off (just the front or the whole card) for Jennifer Blackwood to incorporate into crafts throughout next year's programs. That way others will enjoy them all over again!



## Birthdays

It has been a year since we began announcing paid and volunteer birthdays in the volunteer newsletter. If your birthday hasn't been mentioned and you are sure you were born, please let Mary Allen know.

**3 -- Frank Boucher.** For his birthday, Frank's wife Carol is taking him to visit Antietam Battlefield for the annual luminary program – a luminary is lit for every casualty of that Civil War Battle. Carol will miss volunteering for our Holiday Shopping program. I'm sure Frank appreciates this great sacrifice on her part and ours!

**15 – Mason Maddox.** Mason will soon celebrate his tenth anniversary as the Colvin Run Mill miller. It's hard to fathom that we ever ran the mill – much less kept it running – without his professional touch. Along the way, he has added several grandchildren, a new home, and lots of milling experience, always expanding his knowledge.

**16 – Nick Yannarell.** January will mark Nick's 24<sup>th</sup> year of volunteering at the mill. In between volunteering, Nick and Tina find fun trips to take. This year, besides taking a leisurely Caribbean cruise, they cruised from Texas to the Mediterranean and flew home from Rome.



## Benches and trash can lids

You may have noticed the extra benches in the barn and the new trash barrel lids that replace the rotting old ones. John Burr recently delivered his completed Eagle Scout project to Colvin Run Mill staff. Thanks to John's efforts, we now have benches to be placed in the mill and on site to provide a restful respite for those touring the mill and/or enjoying the beautiful grounds. The trash can lids are an extra bonus, providing a fresh, clean look for our vintage trash barrels.



## Gloria! Gloria!

The New Dominion Chorale, including Colvin Run Mill's long-time Wednesday volunteer, Muriel Levin in the soprano section, will perform **Gloria! Gloria!** featuring the *Gloria* from Puccini's *Messa Di Gloria* plus other seasonal selections with a terrific soprano (Amanda Gosier) and young Latin tenor (Jose Sacin). The performance is Sunday, December 4, 2005 at 4pm at the Rachel Schlesinger Concert Hall on the Alexandria campus of the Northern Virginia Community College. Parking is **free** and tickets can be ordered by phone (703-442-9404) or online at [www.newdominion.org](http://www.newdominion.org).

## From the Miller's Corner

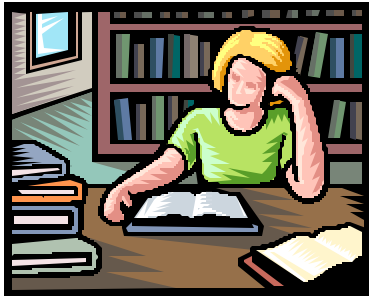
Mike Murphy Dusty Extraordinaire



Mike Murphy is diligently working on becoming a dusty extraordinaire. One recent Sunday, while turning on the waterwheel, Mike noticed that a bolt connecting the fly wheel to the flume gate arm was on its last threads and about to fall out. This would have made the flume gate inoperable. Mike searched around, found parts and repaired the bolt, thus averting a bad situation. Mike's attention to the details is a hallmark of a good miller.

## Oliver Evans Automated Milling System

Bond money for the completion of the Evans' milling system in Colvin Run Mill was approved in the last election. Mason is working on a proposal to include making the grain elevators, cleaning equipment and second grinding stone operational. With the completion of these missing links, we will be able to more accurately interpret the mill as an Oliver Evans' Automated Milling System



## Arti-Facts from Dawn

### Acquiring Reproductions

What do these Colvin Run Mill items have in common: the new flour barrel, Mason's milling clothing, the ceramic butter churn, the cider press in the barn, and the rag doll in the store? They are all *reproductions* of historic items. Using reproductions is appropriate when the original object is rare, fragile or deteriorated; when originals are prohibitive in cost or unavailable; when appropriate environmental controls are lacking; and when objects, particularly

small ones, present a security risk. Reproductions are also used in demonstrations and hands-on education programs.

We acquire reproductions from different sources. The Collections Management section, managed by Jeanne Niccolls, paid for the reproduction flour barrel made by the cooper at Strawberry Banke Museum. The Friends of Colvin Run Mill purchased reproduction clothing for Mason Maddox and his helpers, and Dawn Kehrer made the rag doll for the General Store interpretive program.

Acquiring a reproduction item is a lengthy process, involving consultation and research. Before acquiring a reproduction item, we determine and document its appropriateness to the site mission. Is the original item of the time period being interpreted, and would it have been available in the area? Do similar museums have a like item in their collections? Does written material of the time period mention or show this item? When it has been determined that the item would be appropriate, then we begin the search for an authentic reproduction. We request specifications and documentation from vendors or craftspersons to determine whether their reproduction meets the interpretive criteria. After reviewing the documentation, we select the reproduction and place it on a wish list, or proceed with its acquisition, following Fairfax County purchasing procedures. After the purchase, the paper work is sent to Collections Management for data entry and cataloging.

We want to ensure that the item we interpret is an accurate representation of an original historic object. When I made the rag doll for the store, I consulted a doll collector's guide, furnished by Jeanne Niccolls and Susan Clark of Collections Management. It had a detailed description of a homemade Raggedy Ann style doll, appropriate for the early 1900s – the time period of the general store. For the doll's clothing, I purchased fabric appropriate to the time period according to a book on vintage fabrics. Sally Epskamp (former Colvin Run Mill Volunteer Coordinator) contributed orange wool yarn for the doll's hair. The entire process took about nine months, but we can be satisfied that the doll we interpret for the children is very much like a doll that was actually loved by a little girl long ago.

## On the Road with Bob and Marge

### OPEN AIR MUSEUM MILLS Of Switzerland & the Black Forest

Open Air Museums are popular in Europe. Various historic buildings are moved to a central location and are restored. Restored mills are a significant part of these museums. We visited open-air museums in Switzerland and also in Germany during our September 2005 TIMS (The International Molinological Society) tour.

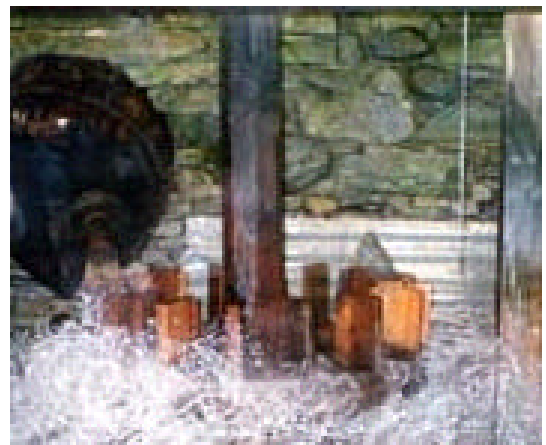
The Swiss open-air museum, opened to the public in 1978, is located between Bern and Zurich. It covers over sixty-six hectares and is one of the largest museum in the country with about one hundred rural houses and buildings, including five or six mills, from most regions of Switzerland. Every building in the museum has its own history.

Americans have only rare opportunities to visit oil mills that extract oil from various seeds. The Swiss museum features an 18<sup>th</sup> century water-powered linseed oil mill from Medel, Switzerland. The oil was used for lamps because candles were very expensive. The linseed crusher consists of two small pestles that drop into a round depression in a large wooden block. The pestles are moved up by cams attached to a shaft driven by the waterwheel and then dropped by the force of gravity. After the linseed is crushed, it is then sifted to remove impurities. The resulting dough-like mass is heated and then pressed to produce linseed oil. The seed cakes, suitable as animal feed, were the residue of the seed pressing and were the only “pay” that the miller received.

The museum contains a few sawmills. Sawmills were usually located at the edge of the village because of the noise made by the sawing operation. The sawmill from eastern Mittelland, Switzerland operated until 1840. It is a post and beam building with a large overshot waterwheel that powered an up-and-down saw.

The 19<sup>th</sup> century bone-crushing mill from Knonau had a fourteen foot overshot waterwheel, powered by water from the southern slope of the Brienz Mountains. It would have been located just outside the village because of the unpleasant odors. The sale of bones brought a small income to the farmer. To prepare the bones for the mill, the farmer removed all the flesh from the slaughtered animals and then boiled and dried the bones. The mill then ground the bones into a fine granular powder to be used as fertilizer. Bone meal has been used as a fertilizer since around 1780.

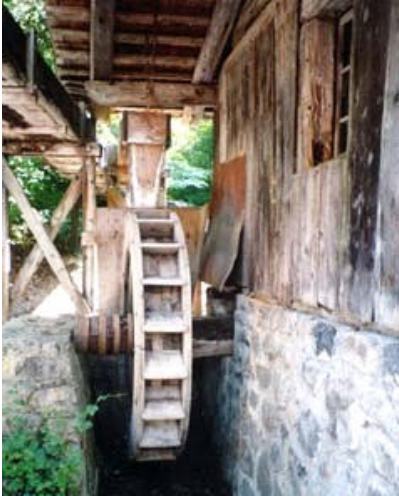
One of the flour mills in the museum is a rare 19<sup>th</sup> century stump mill from the village of Torbel in the upper Valais region of the Alps. The last stump mill ceased operations after World War II. In a stump mill, a jet of water is directed into the turbine-like horizontally mounted flutter wheel through a hollowed out tree trunk. A simple adjustable incline plane regulated the water speed. Mills with horizontal waterwheels were found in the Alpine region where small fast moving streams were available. A shaft from the waterwheel transmitted the power directly to the runner stone. This mill has two runs of local granite stones which can operate at the same time, or one at a time. The wood of the building is from a larch tree. Iron fittings were used in places where there was heavy wear. The mountain stream also furnished power to three other flour mills, a sawmill and a fulling mill.



There was a one-storied frame grain mill, built in 1872 and moved from Naters, Switzerland. Farmers from the southern slope above Naters had to travel over a bridle path to reach the mill. It is a “Vitruvian” Mill, a mill with a vertical waterwheel connected to a horizontal drive shaft, first described by Vitruvius, a Roman writer. A small mountain stream powered the eight foot overshot waterwheel. Unlike some small mills, this mill used sophisticated beveled gearing. A vibrating sieve separated the flour from the bran. The last miller, Marius Salzmann, operated the mill until 1966. He also had a three hectares farm which he sold to someone who built a vacation home on the site.

At the museum is a 2.5 ton wine press dated 1695 that was moved here from Schaffhausen. Since the surrounding

building was in disrepair, it was reconstructed using many new timbers. This building has a hard-packed clay floor and two entrances, but no windows.



The second open-air museum was at Hausack, Germany. At this museum, the mills are grouped together in a compact arrangement. The hemp and grain mill was originally in the Steinbach Valley. It operated until around 1928 –1929 and was moved to the museum in 1966. In the mill, a roller crushed the hemp which was then placed in a pond for three weeks. After the stalks had begun to rot, the hemp was dried over a kiln fire until the core became brittle. Then the fibers were extracted through a breaking process and braided into bundles. A stone edge runner separated and softened the fibers and the long woody part was removed. The fibers were then woven into rope.

The sawmill, built in 1673 in Willmershaf, operated until 1963 when it was moved to the museum. A long wooden flume brought water to the ten-foot diameter breast or middle shot waterwheel. The shaft had three tusked cams called lifting arms that

raised the saw frame. For each revolution of the waterwheel, the saw frame was raised and dropped three times. The mill was able to cut a twenty-foot log in forty-five minutes.

Another interesting mill at the museum was the horse driven oil mill. It was built in 1840, operated until 1945 and moved to the museum in 1974. The mill used an edge runner stone to crush rape seeds, poppy seeds, nuts, and flax. A huge beam then pressed the crushed seeds to extract the oil. The oil was used in lamps, for cooking, and for the flavoring of foods.



The last mill we visited at the museum was the forge hammer mill, called Gutach. It operated until 1938 and was moved to the museum in 1974. The mill had a twelve foot diameter, five-foot-wide overshot waterwheel that powered a very large sharpening stone and also operated the bellows. A two cam wooden shaft lifted the metal shaping hammers. The blacksmith used a free-standing anvil for hand forging tools and over twenty different hammers and twenty pliers to shape his pieces. A demonstration illustrated the shaping of the metal.